The PULPIT

A Periodical of Contemporary Preaching

JULY, 1950

The Name of Jesus

By NORMAN J. O. MAKIN

The Good Which Evil Can Do

By FRED E. LUCHS

Life for the 'Salesman'

By HAROLD L. LUNGER

Our Present Task

By W. J. STELLING

God Says 'Choose'

By RALPH R. SUNDQUIST, JR.

Where Do They Get Them?

By MORTON S. ENSLIN

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Charles Clayton Morrison, *Editor*
Garland Evans Hopkins, *Managing Editor*

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Pulpit Calendar

July 1—Dominion Day (Canada).
July 2—Fifth Sunday after Pentecost; Independence Sunday (U.S.A.); Fast of Tammuz (Jewish).
July 4—Independence Day (U.S.A. and the Philippines).
July 9—Sixth Sunday after Pentecost.
July 16—Seventh Sunday after Pentecost.
July 23—Eighth Sunday after Pentecost. Fast of Ab (Jewish).
July 30—Ninth Sunday after Pentecost.
Aug. 6—Tenth Sunday after Pentecost; Transfiguration; World Peace Day (Anniversary of Hiroshima).
Aug. 13—Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost.
Aug. 20—Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost.
Aug. 27—Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost; Festival of Christ the King.
Sept. 3—Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost; Labor Sunday.
Sept. 4—Labor Day.
Sept. 5—Labor Day (Canada).
Sept. 10—Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost.
Sept. 12-13—Rosh Hashonah (Jewish).
Sept. 17—Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost; Constitution Day.
Sept. 21—Yom Kippur (Jewish).
Sept. 24—Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost.
Sept. 26—New Zealand Day.

SEASON: Whitsuntide (Pentecost).

ALTAR COLORS: Through Trinity Sunday and Transfiguration, white; all other days, green.

(Pulpit Calendar lists dates in the calendar of the Christian year and other observances of nationwide or denominational significance).

For the Record—

This is a most satisfactory issue to send to your study. Each sermon included just *had* to have space found for it in The Pulpit. We read a lot of sermons every month; in fact, for every three sermons published about one hundred have to be returned. Some excellent sermons have to be returned because they are similar to others appearing in a recent issue. Others are Pulpit caliber but could not quite meet the competition of the few finally chosen. And, frankly, some are pretty hard reading. This month the decisions were not difficult to make. These sermons simply demanded that they be published.

Take Ambassador Makin's great testimony. It would be great if in the next three months 20,000 pulpits around the globe would echo the sentiments of this world statesman. Somehow one feels a little safer and a little more hopeful just to know that one of the men guiding the destiny of our old planet has the name above all names so close to his heart. Or take Harold Lunger's masterful answer to the awful pessimism of Arthur Miller's Broadway hit. How easy it is to forget the real values in life, to accept the materialist's despair! And salesmen are not the only ones guilty. "He's top-bracket; gets twelve thousand a year," is preacher talk that might well inspire another Miller tragedy.

Yes, you will read and be helped by all the sermons in this issue. When you have finished, it's not unlikely you will think that the youngster among the authors did the best job. Ralph Sundquist preaches like an old-timer (that is, like all too few of the best of the old-timers) in "God Says 'Choose!'" Incidentally, we are giving a bit more biography this time. Do you like it that way or is it enough to say ". . . is pastor of Podunk Presbyterian"?

We are not given to much comment on next issues. Pulpit readers can better judge the coming diet by what has already been fed them. But you should be told that a truly unusual sermon is in store for you in August. C. Willard Fetter, an Evangelical United Brethren (is there any short way to describe them yet?) pastor in Akron, Ohio, preaches on "Stars at Our Fingertips." It is a compelling message for our times prepared in response to the *Christian Century's* challenge that churches become vocal on the H-bomb issue. Don't miss it.

Thanks for your response to Pulpit Paragraphs. Keep flooding us with them. And now another feature. Pulpit Post, added in this issue, will be a good place to air what you think about what is said, and how it is said, in the Pulpit. G.E.H.

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THE PULPIT

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JULY, 1950

THE EDITOR'S PAGE

The Event of the Month

THE SPIRIT of cooperation and unity is abroad in the churches of American Lutheranism. The Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church, at its 91st annual convention (400 delegates, representing 400,000 members), resolved, with only four votes short of unanimity, to enter the new National Council of Churches which is to come into existence next November at Cleveland, Ohio. This is heartening news. It is believed that the United Lutheran Church (membership 1.8 million), which has had a "consultative" relation to the Federal Council (now to be itself merged in the National Council), will take the same action before next November. Six other Lutheran bodies are looking favorably toward a similar decision. The total membership of these eight bodies is over 4 million. Adding this number to the 27 million church members already committed to the National Council, this federal union of thirty-three churches would then represent a constituency of 31 million. The Augustana church also voted to join in an organic union of all Lutheran bodies to form one Lutheran church. I do not see the name of the Missouri Synod in this connection, but I know that the same spirit of cooperation and unity is moving in that more conservative body also.

Lutheran Isolation Yielding to Unity

The Book of the Month

PARABLES OF CRISIS. *By Edwin McNeil Poteat. Harper, $2.75.*

HERE is an original and fresh interpretation of the sixteen parables spoken by Jesus amid the tensions of the final crisis of his life—his last week in Jerusalem. They are all recorded by Luke. They reflect the tension in the mind of Jesus as he faced the uncertainties of human behavior on the part of the people, the religious and political authorities and his own disciples. These parables have always been regarded as of general application, as indeed they are. But the author senses their application, sometimes obvious, sometimes cryptic, to the actual scene of hectic tension which developed from the moment of Jesus' entry into the city to his abandonment by his disciples and the trial before Pilate. Poteat gives us a truly human picture of Jesus. The Master faced perplexing alternatives and was tempted by them, as he had been tempted in the forty days in the wilderness. The parables express the creative tension which these alternatives produced in Jesus' mind. The reader will find here a fresh interpretation of the events of that crucial week, as well as an illuminating exposition of the parables. The grace of the author's style, his sensitive and supple vocabulary—always just the right word—make the reading of this book a literary delight.

A Thought for the Month

ALL TRUE PREACHING begins with preaching to oneself. It is not necessary, nor is it wise, for the preacher to bare his own soul in public. But if he has first preached to himself in the privacy of his own meditation, his message will be vitalized with a sincerity, a sensitivity of understanding, perhaps even a sympathetic tolerance that will win an irresistible response. Suppose the sermon is on the subject of faith. Where shall the preacher find the right thing to say? From his understanding of the religious difficulties which beset men in our time, from his knowledge of books and his study of the Bible. But all this must be confirmed by searching his own heart. Do I myself have doubts? Is my own faith as clear and strong as my sermon professes? The honest answer to such questions may not change the substance of the sermon, but it surely will change its tone, the mood of its delivery. The preacher will have found that the problem of faith is his problem, too. And though he does not confess it beyond the privacy of his own heart, his people will sense it and join the more earnestly in the prayer: "Lord, help thou my unbelief." Or suppose the sermon has to do with sorrow. There are golden words of comfort which the preacher has learned. To these words about God's love and care he must turn. But if they are to bring comfort they must come, not from the top of the preacher's mind, but from the bottom of his heart, a heart that has its own misgivings, its own poignant impulse to rebel. Thus his words will be more than professional rote—they will be spirit and life. Or suppose the sermon is on temptation. Here, assuredly, the preacher, whatever he intends to say, must not say it until he has looked deeply within himself. No man is more beset by temptation than the preacher. Pride, professionalism, sloth, self-righteousness, the "holy man" complex—these subtle temptations dog our steps. Do we preach to ourselves about our own temptations when we preach to others about theirs? We must not wear our hearts on our sleeve. But if, in the quiet of our sermon preparation, we first preach our sermon to ourselves, our words will search other hearts like deep calling unto deep.

Preaching to Oneself

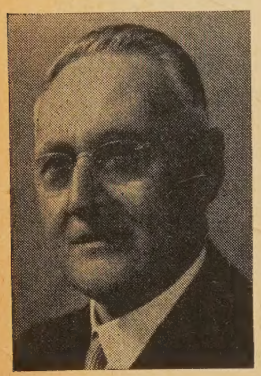
Charles Clayton Morrison

The Name of Jesus

By NORMAN J. O. MAKIN

Acts 3:1-9

I FEEL I should give to my hearers the reasons why I have chosen this subject for consideration. I have been a lay preacher for over thirty-five years, and it had never occurred to me before that there were such hidden treasures in this great name. I have preached many sermons on the Gospels and on the epistles of the Apostle Paul, as well as on many passages from the Old Testament, and I have drawn great inspiration from so doing, but I have never received the same personal satisfaction in proclaiming a truth as I have in speaking the name of Jesus.



Recently I listened to a distinguished clergyman of this country speak of another preacher and of the manner in which he pronounced the name of Jesus. He remarked that there was a richness in it that had never been expressed to him before, and as he spoke my attention was compelled; from that moment there was an insistent expression in my own heart and in my thoughts of the name of Jesus. The prophet of old said, "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6). Does any other name in the world convey these things? Could any other name convey the grandeur of the Eternal Mind? How majestic and triumphant!

It is worth noting that, at least among northern peoples, the name of Jesus has rarely been chosen as a name for children. Indeed, there is a tacit acknowledgment of the sacredness which attaches to the name of Jesus. The name of Jesus is derived from the name "Jehovah," the Almighty God, and actually means "Savior." It has a perfect part in that all-wise design of heaven's mission to man, for it is through this name only that salvation is possible. The heavenly messenger announced, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21).

NORMAN JOHN OSWALD MAKIN, Australia's Ambassador to the United States, is a lay preacher of the Australasian Methodist Church and a member of the Churches Commission on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches. During the late war he was his country's Minister for Navy, Munitions and Aircraft Production. He was the first chairman of the Security Council and is a member of the Far Eastern Peace Commission. He is widely recognized as a leader among the statesmen of the world.

The pledge given by God that he would provide a redeemer for mankind was fulfilled.

I.

I would fain draw your attention to some of the treasures which reside in the name of Jesus. Time will not permit me to speak of many, but before we can come into the enjoyment of these treasures we ourselves must possess the key which unlocks the door to them. That key is *faith*. We must have faith in the name before we can avail ourselves of the *power* of the name. Then, as we avail ourselves of the power of the name, and come to know the Person, we see the *glory* of the name, and his glory becomes greater and greater to our souls. It is as "a shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

We are all familiar with the narrative of the man who sat at the gate of the temple called Beautiful, but was powerless to enter until one momentous day he saw the Apostles Peter and John walking toward him. As we are told in the third chapter of the book Acts, this man had little more in his mind than the hope of receiving alms, but Peter said, "In the *name* of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk" (Acts 3:6). As having faith, this poor lame man experienced the mighty power of the name of Jesus.

What would have happened if the man had refused to rise, if he had said—as indeed many have said throughout the centuries—Who is this Jesus of Nazareth? Why should I put my faith in his name? Happily for him, and happily for us, for whom the record was written, this man obeyed in faith, and experienced immediately the mighty power of the name. He not only walked, he leaped. Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the Son of God, will always give abundantly to faith; there is unlimited power in his hands. He is able to do "exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20).

I often think of this man in the third chapter of Acts as portraying in all completeness the normal result of Christianity. He had *faith* to make the initial move, he realized with joy the *power* that had been given to him, and then, as seeing the glory, he *praised* God (Acts 3:8). It is significant, however, that Peter, when explaining the miracle to the wondering people, said, "And by faith in his name, hath his name made this man strong" (Acts 3:16). Faith in the name is the basis.

Let me say at this juncture that faith is a positive quality. It is a great source of comfort that so many of the leaders of the English-speaking peoples have given evidence of an abiding faith in God. General Eisenhower, Field Marshal Montgomery, General MacArthur and General Patton—to name but four—have all at various times given expression to their faith

in no uncertain terms. Perhaps the supreme example of God's answer to the faith of a nation was seen at Dunkirk in the year 1940. The mist which came over the English Channel, normally clear at that time of the year, in June, can only be described as a miracle. By such seemingly small means is the mighty power of God made manifest!

II.

This brings me to speak of the power of the name. What a colossal mistake was made by those who felt they could subjugate the Son of God and defeat his divine purpose! The scribes and Pharisees, those in authority, undoubtedly had some sense of the power in his name, and were anxious to curb its influence, but how ineffectual were their efforts! The situation had its political implications, for the crowd had made its claim, and Pilate, the representative of government, sought to avoid responsibility by washing his hands. Pilate felt the power of the name, but he did not respond to this authority, which was greater than that which he represented, greater indeed than all governments.

Throughout the ages great edifices of power have been built up, but each in turn has vanished. We read of them in our histories, but their power is dead. In what striking contrast do we behold the living power of the name of Jesus! We have great respect for the power that was expressed in the names of men like Alexander and Caesar, but their power came to an end. It was but a flickering candle compared with the radiance of the majestic authority of Christ. Men have built up systems of power which have caused cruelty and evil, but the power in the name of Jesus is radiant with its transcendent goodness. The power of man is but temporal, dealing only with things of the moment, limited and circumscribed, whereas the authority and power of the name of Jesus is universal and eternal.

These are days when the authorities and power of men are under constant scrutiny, when ideologies are being weighed, when claims of every kind are being pressed. By what standard are we judging matters today? Very often we are satisfied with things as they are because we have seen nothing better. We are satisfied to let our Christianity slip into the background, because we are afraid of upsetting the status quo, we are afraid of the criticism which we may encounter. Have our eyes seen the glory of the name of Jesus? Does that glory transcend all else in our souls?

Electric signs have always been of great interest to me. There is something truly spectacular when one sees a blaze of illumination against a background of darkness. I have seen certain signs portraying but a single name, and there is indeed something compelling in such a sign. In other words, my life was illuminated with the purpose and meaning of the sign. The name of Jesus, which shines with such radiance when set against the present dark background of world affairs, surely reveals an illumination desperately needed to guide the way to a brighter and better way of life. "The heavens declare the glory of God" (Ps. 19:1). How we marvel at the beauties of creation that surround us, but how much more can we be inspired by the name of the One who is the Creator of all these wonders!

There is in our day much bewilderment of mind and grave misgiving regarding human relations. There is an earnest wish for a reassuring sign, one that adds strength to the good purpose and high resolve of peoples, and will point the way to peace and human well-being. This is sought by the common people of every nation and race, no matter by what belief—religious or otherwise—they may be inspired. It is the great human prayer that we shall have a new way of life. That sign has been given, and it was given first by a star, a star which led the wisest men of their day to the child Jesus. It is the sign of the cross, and it is glorious.

The King of kings himself personally fulfilled every condition that he laid down in his Sermon on the Mount. There were those who saw his glory while he was here on the earth, and this glory becomes more radiant with the passage of the centuries. We know that God has highly exalted him, and "given him a name which is above every name"—the name of Jesus.

III.

There is comfort in this name. Comfort! What a wonderful possession! There are times when, amid all the aid that can be brought to humanity, none is more imperative than comfort. This source of strength which calms and inspires, this power transcends all questions of race, of nationality, of youth or age. No medium of comfort is greater than that which is expressed in the petition of prayer made through the name of Jesus. Countless numbers throughout the ages have found this to be their guide, their hope and consolation in the worst extremities of life. On lonely wastes or amid the terrors of the mighty deep, the words of Charles Wesley,

> Jesus, Lover of my soul,
> Let me to thy bosom fly,

have resounded. This is one of the hymns that have become universal favorites among Christian people because it symbolizes so profoundly the great meaning of comfort. It is to be found in the name of Jesus.

The riches in this name are indispensable to world recovery. Indeed, they are indispensable to all progress and well-being. Let us arise and walk and enter the gate Beautiful, into the fullness of a new birth for world hopes and their achievement expressed in the words with which I introduced my subject: "And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

How perfectly this hymn expresses the riches of the name of Jesus:

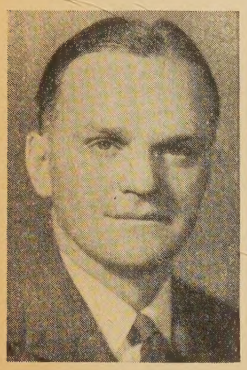
> How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
> In a believer's ear!
> It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
> And drives away his fear.
>
> It makes the wounded spirit whole,
> And calms the troubled breast;
> 'Tis manna to the hungry soul,
> And to the weary, rest.

The Good Which Evil Can Do

By FRED E. LUCHS

Evil, be thou my good.—Paradise Lost

A FEW years ago there appeared in one of our very popular magazines a story entitled "Portrait Above the Fireplace." It told how a garage mechanic entered a second-hand shop to buy a chair. As he gazed across the room with its dingy overstuffed chairs, the springs coming through the seats, he saw the picture. It showed a strong, dignified face with austere features, and haughty eyes directed straight at him. The portrait was dated by the high-necked gown of soft blue silk with leg-of-mutton sleeves.



The mechanic left the store without the chair, without any money, but with the picture, and then . . . every time he came home intoxicated, the eyes would look straight at him, and he felt that his conduct was not acceptable to this woman. One day a friend asked him, "Who is it?" He did not have time to think, and the words came without volition: "This was my mother."

Eventually John realized that his manner of living and the picture did not go together. Months passed. We still find him in the garage by day; and by night, not in the tavern, but in law school. The picture kept him plodding on when he wanted to give up. He could hear the voice, "Go on; you can do it; go on." We next see him as a lawyer of importance. And then he met *the* girl; but not until he had taken her to his room and allowed the woman of the portrait to look at her with approval did he ask her hand in marriage.

With success came temptations. He had a chance to grow rich rapidly by giving himself to the legal work of a political group which had one foot in the underworld. To say "yes" meant that he would have all the things he had always wanted; to say "no" would mean—Well, why not? Everybody else was doing it. His wife was of no help. And then John went again to the portrait above the fireplace. The hard gaze from those haughty, austere eyes hit him like a blow. He knew he could never sell his soul to political crooks. Because of his stand against this gang he was given the business of the largest bank in the city.

One evening an old friend in an alcoholic stupor came to see John. When he saw the portrait he broke into drunken laughter. John, half forgiving the man because he was drunk, still turned upon him with rage and asked him why. "Why," said the friend, "that's the portrait of Mabel Haines. She ran, a generation ago, the most notorious vice district this city has ever known." John's world crashed around him. For hours he walked the streets trying to put the pieces in their proper places. In disgust and despair he returned home. He walked into the room and stood before the picture. As he turned out the light he turned toward the portrait and whispered, "Good night, Mother."

The portrait was idealized as good, not as evil.

EVIL DOES EXIST

As Christians we must admit the existence of evil. Within our world are powers which work against moral and spiritual progress. We plan to say not a word that will whitewash evil's record. Evil is evil. But in real life, as in the magazine story, evil often leads to good results. Analyze evil and see where that procedure takes us.

First, evil and good often have a common source. Good, as well as evil, appears in the process of the unfolding growth of life. Regard the impulse within us for food and self-preservation. This impulse is a common source for good and for evil. For in our desire to get food and to preserve ourselves we build up agriculture, industry, government and education. But in our desire to find these two goals we may resort to graft, bribery, lying, theft, insincerity, disloyalty and even murder. The sex impulse is a driving, creative force. We need it for the preservation of family life and for the onward movement of music, poetry, painting and writing. But that sex impulse can be evil when we pervert it; and thus our lives are stained with domestic infelicity, broken homes, divorce, orphaned children, prostitution, venereal disease.

We, therefore, move onward to say that evil and good are closely allied. Fiction and history abound with men who robbed the rich and gave to the poor. In March 1868, five men rode up to the bank of Nimrod Long in Russellville, Kentucky. With drawn guns, they took $9,000 and fled. Later, a short-barreled derringer was picked up from the sidewalk with the name "Frank James" chiseled in the stock. The bandits were the James boys and their gang. But in less than a month, so the story goes, Mr. Long received the James boys' share of the loot. With it was a letter of apology stating that the brothers had just learned that Banker Long was the man who had lent their father the money to go to college and study for the ministry.

Shakespeare in "King Henry V" tells us, as one character explains:

> There is some soul of goodness in things evil,
> Would men observingly distil it out.

FRED E. LUCHS is an able writer and effective preacher. Coronet *wrote him up in 1948 and he is listed in* Who's Who. *His Sunday morning congregations at The Presbyterian Church, Athens, Ohio are comprised 80% of youth. He is a regular contributor to the* 20th Century Quarterly.

Again in "Romeo and Juliet," Shakespeare has a character say:

> For nought so vile that on the earth doth live
> But to the earth some special good doth give.

GOOD AND EVIL FOREVER IN CONFLICT

But closely allied as they are, much as they overlap each other, they are continually in conflict. Every religion pictures this fight between good and evil. Ancient Greek religion called it a struggle between spirit and matter; Buddhism calls it a struggle between reality and illusion; Zoroastrianism calls it a struggle between light and darkness; Judaism and Christianity have called it a struggle between God and Satan.

And when they come into conflict, evil shows the power of evil. At first sight we do not see the power of evil. Remember when we said, "This man Mussolini is making the trains of Italy run on time"; "Hitler is needed in Germany because he has outlawed strikes." Instead of seeing Hitler as an evil force, men saw him as the last bulwark against Communism, and therefore they financed him. When they saw him in full battle array, they observed that he was evil.

When one out of ten marriages ended in divorce, we looked askance at divorced people and prided ourselves that our skirts were clean. We did not see the broken hearts, the juvenile delinquency, the broken homes, the broken families, the orphaned children. We never suspected that family life might be in danger. Now that a great evil has fallen upon us and we see one out of three marriages ending in divorce, we could be grateful to this evil for pointing up the danger in divorce.

One tavern comes to town. People say, "It's a man's privilege; this is a free country; if a man wants to drink, it is his own business." Twenty taverns come to town and we see drunkenness on the streets. We see a little girl sitting on the curb holding baby, while mother is forgetting her sorrows in liquor. Fights and brawls on the streets and family discord within the home reveal the problems which alcohol brings. When girls under its influence throw aside every moral restraint, then we see the evil of the "innocent glass."

EVIL OFTEN SERVES A PURPOSE

One young person steps beyond the bounds in sex and we say, "Sh, sh, too bad!" But when reports keep coming to our ears about immorality running rampant then we see the throbbing, bursting power of evil. A little evil is just as damaging as much evil. But we may overlook a little evil. When much evil comes and conditions get intolerable, then political parties are cleansed, vice districts are purged, good people become alert.

Evil does good further by showing in contrast the value of the good life. Mrs. Brown may not appreciate the sobriety and moral conduct of her husband until she sees the man next door come home drunk and beat up the family. The country does not appreciate peace until the flying planes overhead drop bombs. A democracy does not appreciate its freedoms until an iron curtain falls, and every man must goose-step to the tune of the state. Evil throws a strong light on the good.

Evil not only shows what is good, but it compels the good to be recognized. A community sleeps in peace, and injustice hits the town. The community rises up in indignation and recognizes the good. A community may hobble along apathetically, but when the judges condemn Socrates and compel him to drink the hemlock, then society sees the good which Socrates taught. When the soldiers nail Jesus to a cross, then the world sees the work of a Savior. When Hitler condemns the town of Lidice to be burned, then contemporary man sees the courage of men who will sacrifice. When a Sacco-Vanzetti judgment is rendered, then people see the value of Justice. The fact of evil compels us to see the reality of goodness. Evil throws good into relief.

One of the significant religious books published during the war was *God and Evil* by C. E. M. Joad, noted English philosopher. In his volume he tells us what the fact of evil did to him. Before the war he was one "who entertained a deep-seated suspicion of all dogmatic creeds." It was in this role that he wrote a book critical of the religious view. Later he wrote:

> My contention [is] that periods of political instability tend to intensify men's interest in religious matters, and that they do this because the prominence into which they throw the fact of evil inevitably raises questions as to the nature of the world in which such events as they see around them occur, and of the Being who is responsible for their occurrence.
>
> Now, paradoxically, it is this fact, the fact of one's conviction of the objective reality of evil, that imparts to the mind the disposition to search for God and to turn towards him when he is found. That this is indeed a paradox—because there is evil, therefore there must be God who is good—I insist.

EVIL IS SOMETIMES A BLESSING

Evil not only compels good to be recognized, but evil may be good—that is, a blessing in disguise. Is there anyone among us who would say that war is not evil, that it is not the hell which Sherman named it? But one of the fruits of war is sacrifice. People whose hearts are stone in the balmy days of peace will share in war-ridden days. Men who have fought side by side with their brothers find comradeship in battle. Women who sewed together at Red Cross meetings in Pikeville or New York experienced a sense of fellowship from '41 to '45. War produces an *esprit de corps* in which the farmer and the city dweller find common fellowship in a great struggle. Courage which lies buried in time of peace blooms forth in time of war.

Although theoretical science advances most during peacetime, yet in the days of battle applied science leaps forward. During the recent war we discovered more effective means of combating influenza, typhus, pneumonia, malaria, hemorrhage, and developed more efficiently D.D.T. and penicillin. We do not mean to whitewash war. War is hell no matter what forms of good develop; but this evil yields blessings. We see the blessings of evil better, probably, if we take a longer look

and view history. Trevelyan, the noted historian, in his history of England tells us of the accomplishments of the Nordic invasion of England:

> The Scandinavian invasions greatly strengthened the forces of progress. For the Vikings were of a stock kindred to the Saxon, but even more full of energy, hardihood, and independence of character, and learning. They brought back to the island those seafaring habits which the Saxons had lost in their sojourn on up-country farms, and it was due to them that a vigorous town life revived in England for the first time since the departure of the Romans. Had it not been for the Scandinavian blood infused into our race by the catastrophes of the ninth century, less would have been heard in the days to come of British maritime commercial enterprise.

Trevelyan continues to say that England profited by the Nordic invasion in liberty, in learning and in law.

The world shudders as it listens to the tales of the persecution of the Protestant Huguenots of France. They were driven by torture to the Mass. They were separated from their loved ones. They were sent to the galleys. They were bruised and beaten. Trevelyan writes:

> The sum of human misery thus wantonly brought about is horrible to contemplate. In the course of years, some hundreds of thousands succeeded in escaping, mostly into England. A large proportion were artisans and merchants of high character, who brought to the lands of their adoption trade secrets and new industrial methods. Religious sympathy prevented their welcome from being marred by trade jealousy. The transference of so many of these men from France to England was not the least of the causes why Britain so far outstripped her great neighbor France in commercial and industrial enterprise. Many French industries were ruined and many English industries founded by the greater cruelty of religious persecution in France.

A present evil often serves an ultimate good. Charles A. Beard, who perhaps has looked at the sermons of history as intently as any living person, believes in what he calls the "calamity theory of progress." He believes that goodness often goes forward on wings of evil. On the basis of historical evidence, he says that our progress springs from tragedy and catastrophe. A commentator expands this theory: "We don't get an international iceberg-reporting system until a Titanic sinks. We don't get social security until a national economic depression creates wholesale unemployment. We don't get a United Nations until we have had two world wars."

GOD USES THE FORCES OF EVIL

When we say that evil may be a blessing in disguise, we are approaching closely another truth: that God may work through the forces of evil. We have scriptural grounds for that statement. In the dark days when Judah was being oppressed by Egypt, Assyria and Babylon, what was the prophetic cry? God is using these evil forces to bring you to a right mind. The forces of evil were merely steppingstones on which the kingdom of Judah moved upward. Where are the three kingdoms now? Vanished. But adherents of the Hebrew faith are still proud of their heritage, which goes on and on and on.

Almost all religions can look back to some such evil as being used by God for the onward march of truth. Hebrew monotheism was developed out of Jewish polytheism during the hard and cruel years of Babylonian captivity. Buddhism began when Gautama, son of a prince, sheltered from all knowledge of life's ills, first escaped from his palace and saw a sick beggar in suffering want. There, in the presence of evil, where many lose their faith, Gautama began the spiritual struggle that made him the Buddha, the "Enlightened One." Judaism began when Moses fled to the desert, a fugitive from Egyptian injustice, burdened by the woes of an enslaved people; and Judaism rose to its magnificent expression in the great Isaiah of the Exile. As for Christianity, it began at Calvary's cross, as damnable an exhibition of barbarity and injustice as history records. See what we are trying to say: The ghastly facts of evil are the very facts from which great religion has always made its start.

Not only the hand of Scripture but the hand of scholarship writes legibly. All that we have said thus far is merely preparation and a steppingstone to what we say now. All that we have said by itself means nothing, unless we can make our last statement. All our words support this thesis, that evil can work for good because there is in the world a dynamic spiritual force which works for righteousness.

Time magazine told us that the man best equipped to speak on world history is Arnold Toynbee, English historian. In his six volumes of history he shatters the frozen patterns of historical and materialistic determinism by asserting God as an *active* force in history. Toynbee believes the answer to the problem of history is the answer to the problem of evil. He asserts that God works through the process of evil and cannot accomplish his purposes without the help of evil.

In Paul Muni's film "The Life of Émile Zola" one scene in particular remains with the audience. Will you go back and review that scene? We are now in the courtroom, justice is having a stiff fight. The judge unyieldingly insists that the Dreyfus case is ended. He declares this witness may not appear, this testimony may not be given; the affair of Dreyfus is a closed case. And as the court comes to its feet, his words sound like the knell of doom for justice. As the crowds shuffle out, we look back at the judge and above him we see the mural of the crucified Christ. Zola's lawyer remarks "That, too, was once regarded as a closed case." That case could not remain closed, for the plan of God decreed that He around whom the case evolved should become the Light of the World.

We know that despite the momentary victories of evil, the hymn of Christmas still holds the truth:

> Yet in thy dark streets shineth
> The everlasting light . . .

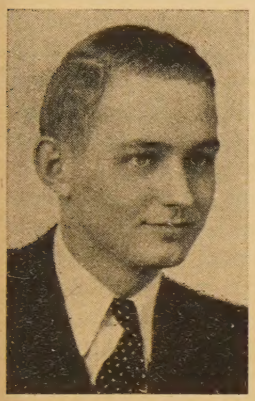
That light can never go out. Evil will be rampant. It will hold the world and man in its power for a day, yet we know that throughout history evil is subject to a higher power, an Eternal Purpose.

Life for the 'Salesman'

A Reply to 'Death of a Salesman'

By HAROLD L. LUNGER

ARTHUR MILLER'S "Death of a Salesman," currently playing on Broadway in New York, is regarded by critics as one of the best plays of the decade. It is significant not only for the artistry with which it is constructed—the way in which threads out of the past are woven into the fabric of the present—but also for its theme. For it lays bare one of the fundamental problems of modern life—the frustration and emptiness which multitudes today are experiencing. Filled with penetrating psychological insights, it reveals the superficiality and inadequacy of the philosophy and life-aims of many men and women and points to the need of giving further attention to the ends and meaning of human existence.



A psychoanalyst, discussing "The Magic of 'The Death of a Salesman,'" said that what grips us about the play is the way it touches an intimate, sore spot in most of our lives. "Who among us could say that there is not a Willy Loman living within us 23 out of 24 hours a day?" The Salesman then is Everyman.

"Death of a Salesman" cries out for an answer. The playwright depicts the *death* of a salesman. Is there a way of *life* for modern man? Have philosophy and religion anything to say to our Willy Lomans? They do, but first let us look at the tragedy of the Salesman.

'HE HAD THE WRONG DREAMS'

In the words of his son, Biff, the tragedy of the Salesman is that "he had the wrong dreams." What were those dreams? They were the dreams of "success" in terms of money, popularity and prestige.

Willy Loman is a man in his sixties at the time the action takes place. All his life he had been driven by the desire to make money. "Someday I'll have my own business, and I'll never have to leave home any more," he told his boys when both he and they were younger. "The world is an oyster," he said; and he was intent upon cracking it open. Everything that he talked about had a dollar sign in front of it. "That's a one-million-dollar idea," he told his sons when one of them came up with a sales promotion scheme. In bragging about a son to his neighbors, he remarked, "They'll be calling him another Red Grange. Twenty-five thousand a year." When one of the boys came home after a long absence, his father's first question was, "Are you making any money?" The older son, who caught his dreams from his father, once said of his boss, with a note of awe in his voice, "That's fifty-two thousand dollars a year coming through the revolving door."

Willy Loman's life goal was incarnated in his brother Ben, who appears and reappears in the play and haunts Willy as the image of the success he himself had wished to become. Said Ben, "When I was seventeen I walked into the [African] jungle and when I was twenty-one I walked out, and by God I was rich." This theme, repeated almost every time Ben comes on the stage, becomes a sort of litany. When he hears these words, Willy is filled with awe and reverence like that of the faithful Catholic at the moment of the elevation of the Host.

Along with his dreams of wealth went the dream of popularity and prestige, the dream of being a "big shot." In his more sanguine days Willy Loman assured his sons, "They know me, boys, they know me up and down New England. The finest people." The Salesman had the naive faith that popularity, besides being an end in itself, was a sure means of gaining wealth. "To be well liked" was both a symbol and a means of success.

The dreams he held for himself the Salesman also held for his sons. They too would be world beaters. After his brother Ben spoke upon one occasion of his success, Willy exclaimed, "That's just the spirit I want to imbue them with!" When the boys showed no signs of "making good," in terms of money and prestige, the Salesman was broken in spirit.

Willy Loman lived constantly in a dream world, for he refused to face reality. He failed to achieve the wealth and popularity he sought. In a highly competitive society, few can. To the swift belongs the race, but what of the average runners? If we have no more adequate philosophy of life than Willy Loman, we too will be frustrated, broken, and driven to despair.

Willy was a pitiful figure. The apartment houses which crowded in about his little house symbolized his deepening sense of oppression and defeat. The pathetic eagerness with which he sought to look up between the apartment houses to see the stars, and to raise a few beets in his tiny patch of yard, typify an incipient inner rebellion against the whole materialistic money-mad culture. His longing for a place in the country is an expression of his desire for escape.

His wife put it quite correctly when she said he was "only a little boat looking for a harbor." As his dreams dimmed, he began blindly groping for an inner security, for something to hold on to, to give meaning to life, to salvage out of the collapse of his dreams. But he

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found no such harbor, no stabilizing faith. His was a typically neurotic reaction. Refusing to face facts, he tried to bluff others and to kid himself that he was a success in terms of his own dream. He came back from his trips with glowing accounts of the sales he had made —until his wife pinned him down and asked just how much he had made in commissions. In one honest moment he admitted that he was not well liked, that he was not noticed, or worse yet that they laughed at him and called him a walrus. Still he kept up his bluff.

THE HUMAN SOUL IS LIMITED

The human soul cannot long stand up under such self-imposed strains. Underneath the surface his character, therefore, began to give way. His was what another has called an "air-conditioned conscience." He egged his sons on to steal sand from a construction job near by so that they could rebuild the front stoop, and gloated over the fine timbers they pilfered. He urged the boys to lie when occasion seemed to require it and he himself grossly exaggerated the success he and they were making. To bolster up his ego, in his loneliness he sought the companionship of another woman on his trips to Boston, paying her off with silk stockings. The sense of guilt, symbolized by his violent reaction whenever he saw his wife mending her silk stockings, added to his misery.

Finally, when he lost his job and his sons failed to measure up to the dreams he had for them, he committed suicide. He was quite in character when he rationalized this act by saying that the $20,000 insurance money would enable the sons to start in business and make their own pile, and when he tried to kid himself that his funeral, with strange license plates from all over New England, would show them how popular he was.

The play comes to a pitiful finale, with his wife and sons and three or four neighbors gathered around his grave. The reactions of his wife and sons are significant and suggestive. The wife, who was utterly crushed, had made the last payment on the house that very day, but there was nobody now to share it with her. "Why," she had asked, "must everybody conquer the world?"

Biff, the son who found his father in the hotel room with the woman and whose whole life collapsed with the downfall of his god, reacted in disillusionment not only against his father but against his father's dreams as well. "He had the wrong dreams," Biff said. "He never knew who he was."

Hap, the other son, had absorbed the spirit of his father. "It's the only dream you can have," he said, "to come out number-one man. He fought it out here and this is where I'm gonna win it for him. I'm gonna beat this racket!" So life moves on and the dream persists—the dream that the supreme goal in life is the acquisition of money and prestige.

THERE IS AN ALTERNATIVE

What alternatives do philosophy and religion have to offer? Is there a way that leads to life rather than frustration and death? There is. It can be stated, in part at least, under four affirmations.

First, success is more than money and popularity. Jesus of Nazareth declared, "A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12: 15). To paraphrase another of his statements, "Man does not live by bread alone, nor even by bread and cake, and furs and television sets."

Guy Howard, famous now as the "Walkin' Preacher of the Ozarks," did not want to be a preacher at first. Rather he wanted to be a farmer, make money and have things—i.e., be a "success," in the popular sense of the word. But then he watched and listened to the advice of a country doctor who "tended" people in the neighborhood. Said the wise old doctor, by his life as well as by his words, "Success isn't things, it's a feeling." Guy Howard got the idea. He became a preacher, and got that "feeling." His life is a success.

Charles Steinmetz discussed the subject in a somewhat similar fashion. "To succeed," he said, "is to make a living at work which interests you"—even though it may not make you rich. "The wise man learns to live. The shrewd man, in the struggle for material goals, learns to make money. Look around you and you will find that the man who has learned to live is the happier of the two. He may be poor in the world's goods but he has the key to happiness in his heart."

There is a lot of wisdom in these words. Success is more than the piling up of money and the accumulation of the things that money will buy. It is more than popularity, prestige, and power. Success is a feeling of inner peace, of content with small means, of self-respect, and of the satisfaction of living for something beyond ourselves.

In the second place, integrity and truth are the very ground of our existence. Unless we are honest with ourselves and others, we can have no peace or happiness.

If he had faced reality, the Salesman would have been on the road, at least, to a life of freedom and release. But he kept on kidding himself; he became a slave to his self-delusions. Moreover, trying to bend the facts to conform to his dreams he played fast and loose with truth and with the moral law. He became burdened with guilt. He lost the respect of his sons and of himself, and retained only the love and pity of his wife.

A certain major general has been much in the news the last few months in connection with scandal in high places. A few weeks ago a news story reported his confession that he had acted in an "unethical" manner at times. But he went on to say that he had no misgivings or sense of guilt, because he has to please only two people—his wife and President Truman. What spiritual obtuseness that a man should think he has to please only his wife and his chief! What about God? What about his own conscience?

There is a moral law in our hearts and in the structure of the universe. We cannot be happy without obedience to that law, without inner integrity and a sense of self-respect.

LIFE NEEDS PURPOSE

A third fact is that happiness comes through devotion to a cause. If life is to have meaning, it must have a larger purpose than its own pleasure and satisfaction.

Jawaharlal Nehru opened one of his recent addresses in this country by denying that he deserved any sympathy for his sacrifices and imprisonments during the struggle for India's independence. "The most significant period in my life," he said, "was the time when I was engaged in the struggle. Ultimately, perhaps, the only true joy for a person is to engage himself in some great cause, in some elementary work, and to give all his strength and energy to it."

George Bernard Shaw once declared, "This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one." Another writer, commenting upon these words, said no one can be happy who lives only for himself. "The joy of living comes from immersion in something that we know to be bigger, better, more enduring and worthier than we are. People, ideas, causes—these offer the one possible escape not merely from selfishness but from the hungers of solitude and the sorrows of aimlessness. . . . The only true happiness comes from squandering ourselves for a purpose."

There are scores of other illustrations of this truth. Life began for Moses when he ceased his aimless, self-indulgent existence as a member of the Egyptian court and threw himself into his people's struggle for justice. On the south side of Chicago live a husband and wife whose great joy in life is serving as volunteer recreation directors to scores of neighborhood children. Hundreds of others have seen their lives take on new meaning and glory as they have given themselves to work with a class of young people or a committee or other project in their local church.

The tragedy of the Salesman is that he had nothing to live for beyond his job and his boys. The good word is that there are persons, ideas and causes—eternally significant persons, ideas and causes—to which we may give ourselves and through which we may find the larger meanings and satisfactions of life.

Finally, religion assures us that our lives will become triumphant when we recognize ourselves as sons and daughters of God. One of Biff's insights into his father's failure was that he didn't know who he was. He didn't, and in a far deeper sense than Biff could know. Willy Loman thought that he was just an ambulatory piece of protoplasm whose deepest needs were food, sex, money and recognition. Actually he was a child of God. He needed an awareness of spiritual realities and bread for his soul. In the last analysis, it was because he failed to recognize himself as a spiritual being that he found life flat, futile and frustrating.

In his *Walden,* Henry David Thoreau asks a question with profound implications: "Should not every apartment in which man dwells be lofty enough to create some obscurity overhead, where flickering shadows may play at evening about the rafters? In the same manner, should not every life be lofty enough to have some room for awe and mystery overhead, something of the dimensions of eternity? All need a sense of the eternal. All need the church and the hour of worship one day in seven to lift up the veil of "meat-and-money thoughts" that else would hold us, as Herman Hagedorn says,

prisoners in this world
Of coins and wires and motor-horns.

GOOD LIVES ON

Religion and the church help to bring us into communion with God and into fellowship with his people. They enlist our devotion to principles and causes that can never fail, even though we ourselves may fail. They give assurance that the good we do will not be interred with our bones but will have a continuing existence.

Joshua Loth Liebman drew it all together when he said, in his *Peace of Mind,* that a wise religion makes these four contributions to peace of mind and to the meaning of our existence: it blesses us with "a sense of our purpose in the world, a feeling of relatedness to God, the shared warmth of group fellowship, and the subordination of our little egos to great moral and spiritual ends."

There is, then, a way of life as well as a way of death for the Salesman. Life may be triumph rather than tragedy. But if it is to be so we must have the right dreams—the right goals in life. We must be honest with ourselves and others, and abide by the moral law. We must have something to live for more significant than our own pleasures and desires. We must remember who we are, and act like sons and daughters of God.

A Pastoral Prayer

By VICTOR E. BECK

Pastor, Gustavus Adolphus Lutheran Church, New York City

OUR FATHER, we come to thee deeply conscious of our guilt in thought and deed. We are thankful that we may bring the burden of that guilt to the cross where our Savior made atonement and know that there its curse and power can be removed. We plead thy gracious promises of forgiveness full and free to those who make a sincere confession of sin. We pray also that our hearts may be opened wide for a full and complete acceptance of thy grace.

Assured of thy forgiveness in Christ, O heavenly Father, let not our failures hinder thee from doing thy work through us. Let thy assurance of the forgiveness of past sins be for us a springboard from which we may plunge with new exhilaration into the stream of life and take mightier strokes for thee. Let not remorse or sorrow lay a paralyzing hand upon our will, but rather give to us added desire and power to serve thee with a new and deeper affection because of thy goodness. Grant that we may be cleansed in order that life shall be for us purer and sweeter and nobler, to the glory of thy holy name. Amen.

Our Present Task

By W. J. STELLING

Let us rise up and build. Neh. 2:18

NEHEMIAH was a Jew taken with thousands of his fellow countrymen into the Babylonian captivity. In Chaldea he rose to the position of the king's cupbearer, which in our day might amount to the position of a private secretary.

Josephus tells us that Nehemiah was one day walking outside the walls of Susa, the royal city, when he overheard some men speaking in his own language. He soon found out that they were Hebrews from Jerusalem. Asking about the welfare of the city, he heard the sad story of how its walls were broken down and how there was much sadness and suffering among the Jews left behind in Jerusalem. Being a great lover of his people and his native land and of the worship of the true God, Nehemiah was deeply moved by the story about his homeland.

The first thing he did after hearing this report is described in the Bible as follows:

> And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven, and said, I beseech thee, O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments: Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned. We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses. Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations: But if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there. Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand. O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy . . .

TODAY'S WALLS ARE BROKEN DOWN

Today we are thinking of other walls and gates which are broken down—the spiritual walls and gates of many a nation and people in the world. How do we feel about these spiritually broken-down walls? Have we fasted as did Nehemiah? Have we prayed and wept that the walls of God's holy Word might be erected in the cities of the world? For the cities of the world are our field, even as Christ has told us, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." As long as the walls of God's Word are not erected around the world's cities, they will be cities desolate and dark, cities where, as it were, the prowling wild beasts of superstition and unbelief go about unhampered in their destruction, for the walls to stop them are broken down. Would to God that when we hear the report of these broken-down walls in so many Jerusalems it would move us to weeping, fasting and prayer.

After his fasting and prayers, Nehemiah again went about his work as the king's cupbearer. But he could not forget the story of the broken-down walls of Jerusalem. By and by the sadness told on his face. It was noticed by the king, who asked for the reason of it. With fear and trembling Nehemiah told his ruler the reason for his sadness. Thereupon the king gave Nehemiah permission to go and do what he could for the restoration of the broken-down walls. Quickly thereafter Nehemiah gathered his personal belongings, selected a group of men minded like himself, and started for Jerusalem, a journey of no small undertaking in those days.

After he got there, Nehemiah used his head. He knew of the opposition he would encounter in building up the broken-down walls. He therefore made his trip of inspection by night in order to keep his undertaking a secret as long as possible. Once he knew what was to be done, he made his plans and started to work. The walls were portioned off into short lengths to various groups for rebuilding. Priests and Levites shared in the tasks. The Bible tells us that Shallum with his daughters did his share of the rebuilding of the walls. All helped, except one group of whom we read, "And next unto them the Tekoites repaired; but their nobles put not their necks to the work of the Lord."

Nehemiah himself was so taken up with his work that he slept with his work clothes on and kept a trumpeter constantly at his side to sound an alarm should there be an attack by the enemy at night.

W. J. STELLING is pastor of Trinity Lutheran, Freistatt, Missouri. This church is one of the twelve great churches of America selected by a poll of 100,000 ministers for study by the editors of The Christian Century. *It was described in the June 21 issue of that magazine.*

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Here we may ask ourselves: Could it be that our program of Christian missions lags today because we have not the vigor and zeal and zest of a Nehemiah for the rebuilding of broken-down walls? We will have to pray ourselves into action—yes, pray as though everything depended on God alone; and after having prayed ourselves into action, then work, work as though everything depended on us alone.

THE TASK IS DIFFICULT

To rebuild broken-down walls is neither easy nor cheap. It took Nehemiah twelve years and the giving of all his personal wealth to get the job done, but he got the job done. Would to God we could for the start give only twelve minutes each day for the rebuilding of some broken-down wall in our own household or city or community, and from there work to the ends of the world. Let's be honest with ourselves. Of too many it must be said what we heard above, ". . . but their nobles put not their necks to the work of the Lord." Let it rather be true of us what was said of most of the people who determined with Nehemiah to rise up and build: "So built we the wall; . . . for the people had a mind to work." What a difference that would make!

The rebuilding of the broken-down walls of Jerusalem involved hard labor. Clearing away rubbish is disagreeable and it makes blisters in the hands. People got tired, very tired, in that hot sun and not a few of them broke down. But the work went on.

Then there were the suspicious heathen neighbors and also the Samaritans who wanted to stop the undertaking of repairing the walls. For a while this opposition from without was so serious that half of the men stood guard with swords and spears in hand while the other half worked, and even the workers kept a sword at their side while they were working.

The opponents tried tricks to get Nehemiah out of the way. One day a priest told him that he was in danger of his life and should therefore flee with him into the temple to hide in the Holy Place. To this Nehemiah replied, "Should such a man as I flee?" This was neither arrogance nor pride on his part; it was the faith of a man who had just finished praying, "Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands." If there is anything in this hurrying age the average Christian worker needs to have impressed upon him, it is the necessity of much prayer. By praying more we will not work less, but we will accomplish vastly more. Luther needed an extra hour of prayer daily toward the end of his career because he had so much work to do.

MISSION FIELDS NEED REBUILDING

If and when we start rebuilding the broken-down walls in the mission fields of today with the same zeal and zest that Nehemiah showed with the broken-down wall of Jerusalem, we will meet with the same opposition. But we also battle opposition from within: people "lay down" on the job; the work is too hard; it can't be done anyway, so why waste more time; it costs too much; if you want to do that, it is your privilege, but let me alone. What would have happened with us had the Lord Jesus felt like that; if he had said, "Father, do what you want to with those rebel sinners, but let me alone"? Then there is the opposition of men who tell us that we have to give up the doctrine of a personal God, for, so they say, the path to genuine religion lies through striving after rational knowledge.

So we need to build with the same watchful eye on the enemy as did Nehemiah, half of us, as it were, standing guard with the sword of God's holy law, stopping the gainsayers with "Thus saith the Lord," while the other half builds with the gospel inviting the world to come to Jesus who so tenderly calls, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Nehemiah had mockery to endure. They said: "Will they leave it in the hands of God, or raise the walls by offering sacrifices? Will they get a miracle performed for them and finish the walls in a day? Will they make the rubbish heaps come out of themselves as if they were alive?" And then someone would sneeringly add, "You don't need to be afraid, a jackal climbing over any work they may do will knock it all down." Naturally such mockery and ridicule stung Nehemiah to the quick. But he was not the man to be turned aside from his purpose by a laugh from the enemy.

Neither shall we be turned aside from our determination to build up the spiritually broken-down walls. Let the enemy laugh, let him say what he will. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh. This we know, that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the Lord's anointed.

TASK WELL DONE BRINGS REJOICING

Then one day the walls of Jerusalem were finished. The last load of rubbish had been hauled away and the last piece of scaffolding burned. A man went about putting a drop of oil on the hinges of the gates so that they might swing without a squeak. And then there came a celebration. And what a celebration it was! It lasted for days and each day was begun with a six-hour period of the study of God's Law. Not by the priests and Levites was this done, but by the entire congregation. And promises were made, promises no more to serve strange gods, to put away the evil from among them, to continue steadfastly in the work of the Lord.

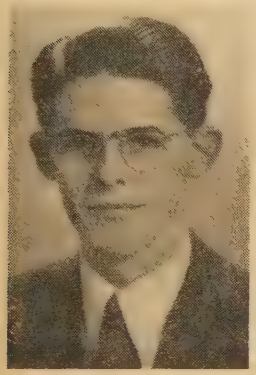
We need to remember that after a task well done there is always rejoicing. So let us apply ourselves. Application usually begins with an individual consecrating himself to the work that is to be done. Someone has said that an institution is the lengthened shadow of one man. How very true of the church, for the church is the lengthened shadow of Jesus Christ, the lengthened shadow of men like Paul and Luther and countless unnamed men and women who determined to rise up and build. Your church and mine will be what we personally are and put into it. Our prayers and fastings, our thinking and working will be a lengthened shadow falling upon others that they too may be inspired to "rise up and build."

God Says 'Choose'

By RALPH R. SUNDQUIST, JR.

I call heaven and earth to record this day against you that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: that thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life and the length of thy days.
—Deuteronomy 30:19-20a.

IN THE PROFOUND and moving story of *Bartleby the Scrivener,* Herman Melville told the story of a man whose attitude toward life was summarized in the simple words, "I would prefer not to." His was no defiant, "I will not," nor, much less, an agreeable, "I will." Always, even when pressed by a puzzled employer who was angry and sympathetic by turns, the scrivener would either reply, "I prefer not," or say nothing at all. So Bartleby refused to choose and gradually became less than human. He changed into an animal, to be caged and fed and feared as an animal; and finally he became nothing, a corpse merely, but such a corpse as did not deserve even that designation. He ended as a wasted, lifeless body, "strangely huddled . . . [with] his knees drawn up, and lying on his side, his head touching the cold stones," a foetus which had never been born. Had Bartleby been given an initial choice, no doubt he would have answered, "I would prefer not to be born." Of course, a baby does not choose to be conceived and brought forth, but once he draws into his lungs a first gasp of air, he must begin to choose. Even the suckling infant must decide whether to eat or not to eat—whether to live or to die. Life demands that—if we are to be human persons we must choose.



THE BIBLE EMPHASIZES CHOICE

The Bible knows and emphasizes this hard demand for choice, for it fathoms life and it perceives man as he is. Further, it knows God. Again and again it sets before us stern and troubling words: "God says, 'Choose —choose life or death!' "

That our humanity demands decision is obvious to all of us. No voice will be raised in denial, for to speak out in refutation would itself require a decision. But there is not such ready agreement with the proposition that *all* our choices are of life or of death. Our situation is not so simple as that of the baby who chooses to eat and live or to spurn his food and die. Some of our choices, of course, are critical—to live or to die; the great majority, however, are trivial—to have cream in our coffee or to drink it black. Yet it is true that our lesser decisions form the foundation on which are based our crucial ones. Minor choices, for example, add up until sometimes we find abruptly that without our having been aware of it we have already made a momentous decision. We think, perhaps, of a family which has wasted away its savings on insignificant purchases—petty investments that were so obviously not matters of life or death that little time was lost in thought over them. Suddenly the family discovers that its savings are no more—that Father must work longer hours, that Mother must leave the household to seek employment, that Junior must withdraw from high school to find a job, that Younger Sister must hurry home to an empty house so she can dust the furniture that no one sits in any more and sweep the floor that no one tracks over any more and prepare the suppers that no one much relishes any more because everyone is too tired to taste the food he is eating. The family has gone, and in its place are individuals, each leading a separate life during the day, each so fatigued and so cut off from the others by the distinctiveness of this workaday existence that he can't enjoy a common life with the others in the evening. The family is dead.

MINOR CHOICES IMPORTANT

Sometimes our minor choices add together in a different way to make our critical decisions for us. The trifling day-to-day choices seem at last, quite insensibly, to stamp and bind our characters so that when a paramount selection must be made we really have no choice. During the past few years more than one life history has come out of Europe to show us how important are trivial decisions—how they are in fact matters of life or death. There was the thriving French industrialist, for instance, whose joy of life was to eat in a great café, to see the opera in company with a charming woman, to spend the summer on the Riviera. Always he chose that sort of thing; and his were no immoral choices, nor was he in danger of dissipating his income. But then came war and the defeat of France; then came the Nazis and their brutal demand: Collaborate or lose your business! For this man there was no choice: if he lost his industrial plant his income was cut off, and if he had no income he could not partake even of the paltry entertainments still remaining open to the public. He chose death, for at the moment of his collaboration, he lost the integrity of his life. He lost even his joy of life: no longer would the cafés hasten to place the best food

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before him, never again would respectable women be seen with him, and nowhere were summer resorts open to him. Soon, of course, he lost even his physical life, for the Army of Resistance realized at once the help which he gave to the Nazis. The toss of a grenade, and he was dead.

There is, however, another and deeper sense in which *all* our choices are of life or of death. All of them are made before the eyes of God, and it is God who has given to us life and death. I say "given," for is not death too a gift? Do we not with Job sometimes complain against God,

> Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery,
> And life unto the bitter in soul;
> Which long for death, but it cometh not;
> And dig for it more than for hid treasure;
> Which rejoice exceedingly,
> And are glad when they can find the grave?

And do we not remember also Gulliver's voyage to that strange island of Luggnagg. Here in this unknown kingdom lived the *struldbrugs,* people who knew by the bright red marks over their left eyebrows that they should never die.

> They commonly acted like mortals till about thirty years old; after which, by degrees, they grew melancholy and dejected, increasing in both till they came to fourscore. . . . [At this age,] which is reckoned the extremity of living in this country, they had not only all the follies and infirmities of other old men, but many more, which arose from the dreadful prospects of never dying.

"The dreadful prospects of never dying": life without meaning because it has no foil, decisions without significance because there is time for all choices—we must believe that death as well as life is the gift of God. And if life and death be the gifts of God, then he is sovereign over them; and he is sovereign also over us to whom these gifts are offered. If he were not already our ultimate ruler, the very giving of life and death and of choice between them would make him so. God sees all our decisions, and he knows in each case whether we choose life or death, blessing or cursing, even when we ourselves do not realize the importance of our selections or the final outcome of our choices.

WE NEVER FULLY UNDERSTAND

And, of course, the truth of the matter is that we never are able fully to understand the magnitude of our seemingly immaterial choices or the final outcome of our decisions. Partly that is because we are finite and cannot forecast the future, but partly it is because our sinful pride lets us see our choices only in terms of their immediate benefit for *us.* If we were to take seriously this fact of our insufficiency, we should say to ourselves bluntly and desperately, "I can't choose. To choose is beyond me." And perhaps we should be tempted to act as did Bartleby—to say, "I prefer not to." But we have seen the end of Bartleby—how he lost all semblance of humanity and finally died as one who had never been born. His refusal to choose was in reality itself a choice. He had before him life or death, but he would not decide, so death was given to him. The refusal to choose or the indeterminate holding in abeyance of our decision itself becomes a choice—the choice of death!

Yet there remains with us the awful consciousness of our inability to decide: we are not able to know whether we choose life or choose death. We are not able to know because, as the Bible understands and reminds us, we have estranged ourselves from God and do not know his purpose for us. We do not cleave to him, so we cannot obey his voice, and love him, and live. It is as if a stranger had stepped between God and us and were blocking our vision of what God wishes us to do. Paul spoke truly of *our* lives when he looked into his own:

> . . . I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me.

We want to choose life, but we choose death instead, or we do not know what we choose. There is the temptation to say, "It is not my fault; the blame rests only upon this stranger—this sin that has stepped between God and me." It is as if we were merely observers, withdrawing and watching sin perform those strange actions. But we cannot escape from responsibility in this manner: those actions which sin performs are *our* actions. We realize with Karl Barth that

> Reality, even the reality of religion, knows but one man, and I, not some other, am that man. It is one man that wills and does not perform; one man that does not will, and yet performs; . . .

With Paul we recognize that it is "sin which dwells within *me.*"

COMPLEXITIES AND CONFUSION

Can we recall Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* and the fearful circumstances which pressed in upon Jean Valjean and his widowed sister and her seven children?

> One winter was hard, and Jean had no work to do, and the family had no bread. No bread, literally none, and seven children.

So Jean Valjean smashed a pane of glass at the baker's and reached in and seized a loaf. And what if he had not stolen it; would he not have been a murderer, responsible for the deaths of seven small children? But Jean Valjean was inexperienced and clumsy and made too much noise. His arms still bleeding, he was captured and was brought before the court, charged "with burglary committed with violence at night, in an inhabited house."

Think now of the situation in which the police magistrate found himself: Should Jean Valjean be released because his motives stemmed from good impulses? And if he were freed, what thief and murderer would not also claim humanitarian motives? Where could the line be drawn? In all the confusion of the case, only one fact was certain: Jean Valjean had committed burglary. Give him five years, then—five years at the galleys!

But what was the magistrate's choice; was it of life or of death? Was he just or unjust? Was there possibility of justice whichever he chose? He could not say that he was a mere onlooker: *he* was one of those who

had failed to provide help—even of the meagerest sort—for the starving children of his village. *He* was one of those whose failure to care about the *whole* community was responsible for the dreadful poverty and misery in which lived Jean Valjean and his fellows. Was it not the magistrate's own sin, and that of his compatriots, which drove him to face this impossible situation?

INDIVIDUAL VS. COMMUNITY

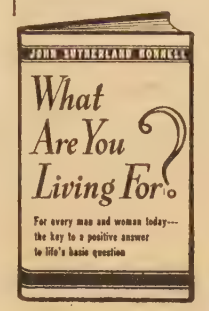
Nor do we find ourselves in a different situation. Are we not members of a community which tolerates and therefore is responsible for our frightful slums and the crime which is bred there? Of course, *we* did not produce those slums. But the fact remains that we are responsible for all our brothers—not only for those to whom we send our gifts to alleviate their suffering, but also for those who exploit the slum situation, who build tenements and refuse to keep them in decent living condition. *We* are responsible, and there are not two "we's"; there is only one "we,": and it is sin which dwells within *us*. It is sin that creates the situation in which there is no clear right and wrong—no unmixed life-or-death choice. We dare not force our exploiting brothers to conform to standards *we* think are proper, for then we should be guilty of the very sin of which we accuse them. The use of sheer power against someone with whom we disagree is always a denial of his integrity and his freedom. Of course, we institute a policing system, but that is itself necessary only because of our common sin. By this system we enlarge our own sin yet further—sin which is perhaps, from the viewpoint of society, not so great as that which there would be without the police, but no less sin. We are like the magistrate of *les Misérables*: whatever decision we make is not free of taint precisely because we ourselves are sinful. Sin dwells within *us*.

And there is no individual "I" who can pretend that he is not part of this common "we"; there is no "I" who can claim honestly that he is only an observer. Suppose I ask myself the question, "Who does not eat because I eat? What European family does not receive food parcels because after I have purchased my own meals, not enough money remains to pay for a package? What American family is not able to buy enough bread because after I have eaten my loaf there is that much less on the market and that much more reason for prices to remain as high as they are?" But see what happens, for this conversation I am having with myself must go on. "I cannot starve myself"—surely I must say that much—"I cannot starve myself in order to supply food to Europeans or to Americans, for that is literally choosing death instead of life. And I cannot flatly refuse to pay market prices for bread, for that is denying the chance for life to store-keepers and millers and dairymen and farmers. *I* am another magistrate with an impossible choice: I cannot choose life. Any choice that I make is circumscribed by my own sin—the sin which dwells within *me*."

GOD IS OUR HOPE

What remains for us then? We *must* choose, and yet we *can't* choose, for the image of sin stands between us

Good Reading
Good Preaching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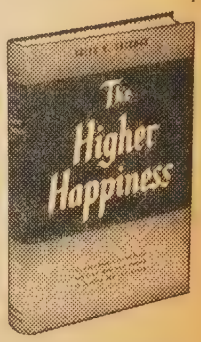

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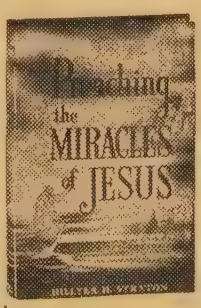

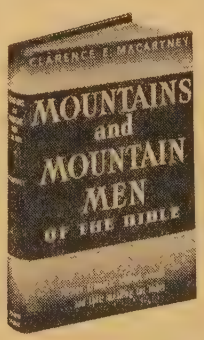

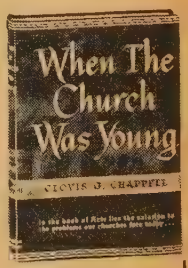

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and God. There remains only this: to recognize our inability rightly to decide, and therefore to repent before God, committing ourselves wholly to him. We have to make that one clear choice before we can make any other: we have to acknowledge our sin and beg for forgiveness. When we do, of course, we destroy all claim to life. We realize that we have not life, and that our decisions cannot give it to us. Yet, in that moment, we choose life, for we place ourselves completely at the mercy of God. He is our sovereign. He himself is our life and the length of our days. It is as Jesus said, "Whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."

And what is this life which we find when we confess and repent? It is life at its fullest—life and blessing. We choose it not merely in order to live. We choose it so that we may love God, obeying his voice and cleaving to him: realizing that sin yet dwells within us, and it is death; but at the same time that, by his forgiveness and grace, God also dwells within us, and he is life.

Here we are then: all our choices are before the eyes of God, and all of them are important; for all of them are given to us and demanded of us by God himself. We *must* choose, and we *do* choose! In no case are we certain that we select life; in every case we are positive that we sin and must repent. That is the whole force of the Christian gospel: in repentance we choose life.

The Offering Plate a Magic Carpet

A Sermon for Children by Thomas Calhoun Barr

YOU must all have heard the story of the three brothers who went out in search of some curious article or instrument that would so please their father that he would permit one of them to marry their cousin, a beautiful princess. One found a magic tube. You could wish to see something and it made no difference how far away it was, all you had to do was look into the tube and you would see it. Another found a magic apple. If a person was very sick all that person had to do was smell the apple and he would immediately become well. Possibly the most wonderful of all was a magic carpet the third brother found. He could sit on this carpet, wish to be somewhere and immediately he would be there. If you had the carpet and wished to be in New York all you would need to do would be to sit on it and wish and you would be there. If you would like to spend the day in Europe you could sit on the carpet, wish you were in Europe and you would be there. You could come sailing home that evening.

A magic carpet would be a fine thing to have, but magic carpets are found only in stories. Yet I know of a magic carpet that is not simply in a story. It is in this church. It is this offering plate. When you put some money in this plate you go, as if you were on a magic carpet, to Africa. You will preach a sermon and lead the worship service of the people. Or you may go to China and be a doctor. Your offering will take you to Japan to teach school. This magic carpet of an offering plate will fly you down to Mexico and Brazil to help people raise better crops and animals and build better homes.

Don't ever believe that magic carpets are simply in story books. You have one here in the church. And any time you want to take a trip around the world and do many fine things you can put your offering in the plate and you will be off on your exciting journey.

Titles and Texts — What Pulpit Readers are Preaching About

Elmer E. Voelkel, Plymouth Congregational, Fort Wayne, Ind. "The Life of the Spirit." Gal. 5:1, 16—"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. This I say then, walk in the Spirit."

H. H. Barnette, John B. Stetson University, DeLand, Florida. "The Home-Centered Ministry." Acts 20:20—"You Elders well know . . . that I never shrank from declaring to you anything that was profitable, or from teaching you in public and in your homes."

J. R. Brokhoff, Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, Atlanta, Ga. "The Signs of the Times." Luke 21:25—"And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity."

M. G. Berglund, Temple Baptist, San Francisco, Calif. "The Vertical aspect of Religion." Acts 1:11—". . . Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? . . ."

George S. Siudy, First Congregational Church of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minn. "Noise from the City." Isaiah 66:6—"A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the Lord. . ."

(The Pulpit welcomes contributions for this column. Give minister's name, church, address, sermon title and text. Space allows us to print only those of especial timeliness or unusual significance.)

Pulpit Post

For a Parents' Day

SIR: Amen, Amen and Amen to the thesis of the feature article by Homer R. Chalfant, "For A Parents' Day," in The Pulpit for June.

It may be of interest for you to know that I have promoted in season and out of season the more wholesome, balanced emphasis upon the Christian Home, and especially so on the second Sunday of May each year.

First Congregational Christian N. Ellsworth Escott
Goshen, Indiana.

Not Just for 'Name' Preachers

SIR: I had long thought your periodical of contemporary preaching was concerned only with the thoughts of what you called "name" preachers. Your "For the Record" in the June, 1950, issue was so well written I have been convinced otherwise.

Certainly a young Canadian preacher hidden on the banks of the St. Lawrence does not come under the category of "name" preachers, but merely submitting copy to the editors of "The Pulpit" will give me a sense of being part of the contemporary scene.

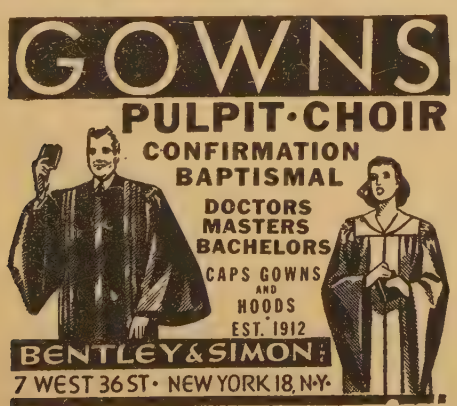
First Baptist, R. C. Plant.
Brockville, Ontario.

'What Makes a Good Sermon?'

SIR: "What Makes a Good Sermon?" You have not asked my opinion, but I thought I would send you the run-of-the-mill viewpoint. So here it is:

1. A good man, one who practices what he preaches and is aware of the Eternal in the realm of the temporal.
2. A good mind, one that is well trained, well filled with the good things of God—from the Bible, from the schools, from books, from experience in a confused and tragic world.
3. Good news, some phase of the adventure of God into our human world to show us what He is like and to make known that He is available for human need.
4. Good order, ideas organized in orderly fashion and presented in natural sequence.
5. Good illustrations, ones that are apt and illuminating, "truth embodied in a tale" that is able to "enter in at lowly doors."
6. Good atmosphere, the atmosphere of prayer while it is in preparation, and delivered with an awareness of God's infinite nearness.
7. Good delivery—plain, natural, conversational tones, that give evidence of sincerity, earnestness, and the desire to be helpful.

Christian Church, Howard W. King.
Philadelphia, Pa.



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Where Do They Get Them?

By MORTON S. ENSLIN

LAST SUNDAY morning, as I sat in our little village church and listened to the visiting big-shot city preacher's near-peroration, this question, which has plagued me through the years, recurred once more: Where do preachers get these tear-jerkers which are supposed to drive home their message? I say "once more," for during the past ten years I have been singularly blessed through the absence of tear-jerkers. Our minister often uses illustrations, but not infrequently they really clarify, and never can they be classified as heart-throbs. But even in that fortunate corner of Zion I know the tear-jerker is still common, for on occasion a visiting luminary has graced our pulpit, and generally his sermon has been furbelowed with at least one example of what in my irreverence I have come to call excerpts from "Two Thousand Sacred Thoughts for Tired Preachers."

The quality which I dislike most in these stories is not their bid to the emotions, not even the fact that so frequently they are delivered in appropriately muted tones produced largely by the *vox humana* and tremolo stops. All that is bad, but their most objectionable element to me is their transparent nonsense and artificial unreality. Some of our classic parables are tear-jerkers—Nathan's one ewe lamb, even the Prodigal Son—but they are real. People did and do those things. The stories of which I am speaking are just the opposite. People don't and if the congregation was not in a lambent haze it would realize it and hoot. They are of the sort, in a word, which my slangy daughter styles "corny."

To revert to the latest example. It came toward the end of the sermon. That is always the *locus classicus*. I could not see that it illustrated in the least the theme of the homily, but the preacher seemed to feel that it did. I do not need to rehearse the story in detail; its salient point can be retold in thirty seconds though in the preacher's telling it required nearly 10 minutes. (In this the irreverent may perhaps see a genetic connection with that other standard adjunct of worship, the anthem.)

The story was laid in Switzerland—the preacher rather thought it was on the Matterhorn—and had to do with a woeful little man called Hunchy. Hunchy loved the mountains e'en though he was prevented by physical deformity from climbing. Still, he was frequently in the halfway house, high up on the mountain, in itself a day's climb—and he seemed usually to have his climbing togs at hand. This particular evening the boss climber asked Hunchy if he would not like on the morrow to go up to the sun-kissed summit. Then followed a three-minute dialogue largely comprised of "Oh yes, sir, but I can't" and such gentle whispers of encouragement as only a burly Alpine guide can produce.

Came the morning, and amid poor little Hunchy's constantly repeated "I'll only be a burden, sir" and the other guides' faithlessly incredulous "You ought to be ashamed to raise his fruitless hopes," the masterful words of quiet confidence rang out, "Hunchy, grasp your alpenstock!" And so, with the boss guide putting both hands beneath Hunchy's shoulders, they not only set out for the glistering tip, but they made it, and Hunchy shed copious tears in happy bliss as he squatted on the needlepoint apex and breathed, "Oh sir, I never could have done it without your help."

Now I have never climbed the Matterhorn, but I have climbed enough of his lesser sisters to find this story distinctly difficult. Actually, as we compared notes after the sermon, both my wife and I, found that we had got a bit bogged down before the denouement. We had expected poor little Hunchy to succumb en route, and were waiting to see whether he would be borne aloft on the sturdy shoulders of the noble guide, feebly protesting, "Oh sir, I must be a terrible burden to you; am I not chafing your so strong shoulder?" or to go plunging down to death through one of the awful crevasses which were yawning everywhere about, perhaps carrying with him the stouthearted and thick-headed guide, and leaving behind him a haunting cry: "Mine eyes have seen the summit, but sir, you really hadn't ought to have done it."

But apparently we were in the minority. As the story wore on to its climax you could see eyes and noses being surreptitiously wiped. And when the preacher paused as both he and little Hunchy reached the summit, very vocal was the response of the palpitating and un-Alpine congregation as they ranged all the way from sniffles to snorts.

Then there are the two standard old favorites featuring the financial tycoon and the professor of philosophy. Who has not heard them? The tired businessman stands at the end of a busy day at the half-opened window of his Wall Street office, gazing out over the city at his feet to the distant horizon as the setting sun drops behind the hilltops west of Jersey City. Suddenly he finds himself convinced of the folly of amassing millions, and resolves that henceforth he will be as one of the poor and simple—even as the devout old Irish scrubwoman who cleans up his office (and who in all likelihood at that moment would have been expressing her simple piety in heartfelt "damn's" because the big shot didn't have the decency to clear out and let her start her evening's job).

And the atheistic professor of philosophy—ah, that's another honey. There he sits at his lecture desk. The class has been dismissed, the brilliant lecture is over in which once again he had paraded all his old arguments against the existence of God and in addition had added a new crack to buttress his position and to harry the faith of those exposed to his baneful influence. As he sits there in the gathering twilight, his hand steals unconsciously toward the Bible, which for no clearly stated reason is always at the hand of atheistic professors of philosophy. Somehow the book falls open and he reads, as in letters of fire,

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the verse to which with characteristic homiletic magic the pages had providentially opened: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God."

Then, as he sits there, his heart is strangely warmed, and there come to him as in a vision the reproachful eyes of poor little Anita McWhimsy, as she had gazed at him in class but an hour before, crutches resting against her chair, her buck teeth slightly protruding from her sagging jaw, in holy sadness at his blasphemous wisecracks. As the curtain starts to fall on this now too-sacred-for-instrusive eyes spectacle, and preacher and congregation steal away with choky feelings, we seem to hear a deep and low moan, then softly—oh, so softly—the penitent singing, "Jesus, I come to thee."

Of course with congregations accustomed to answer the query, "What is the chief end of man?" with a devout "Dividends," or who demand that their preachers remember that they are apostles to the genteel, slight modifications of these two stories must be, and are, easily made. But no denomination that I know—and I think I know them all fairly well—need think itself a religious Sahara so far as these "Weep some more, my lady's" are concerned. Who has not heard the tried and true account of Turner's "Sunset"— the critical woman, the sweetly haunting word of gentle reproof by the so conveniently at hand maestro, as he seeks to turn her shallow realism to the splendors invisible to her myopic and earthbound eyes?

And then there is Darwin's deathbed. Here too convenient modifications are available. Sometimes a son is present; sometimes none but the preacher is present, striving to woo the now nearly defunct quester after the sordid to see the beauties he had so slightly dismissed. But always comes the whispered response through lips a bit dry, and broken by unuttered sobs: "Oh, if I only could!"

These two old favorites evidence one of the most necessary qualities of pulpit tear-jerkers: an amenableness to modification. The story must be cast, so to speak, in a medium which allows some molding by the master hand. One might be flippant enough to say that putty is after all preferable to marble. In fact, those expert in that most modern of biblical tools, form criticism, might well use pulpit stories as a sort of control for historical research as to how biblical stories grew. (This subject is respectfully suggested to preceptors hard put to discover appropriate subjects for doctoral dissertations.)

First there is the gradual development from a simple pronouncement or aphoristic word, with no indication as to the where or when or why or to whom. Gradually these elements are added: the setting becomes clearer and more distinct; the central figure becomes more sharply defined—generally, as will be remarked in an instant, becoming the preacher himself, and in a more or less commanding role. The geography becomes more definite, be it the halfway house on the side of the Matterhorn or the Wall Street office. In a word, we pass rapidly through apothegms and paradigms to folk tales and miracle stories. Of course in this process, in modern stories as in some of the older ones, the original point may be lost or give way to a new one; but not infrequently the listener in the pew, knowing the story in several versions, is able to trace the development and thus escape boredom.

Nor is this mere flippancy on my part. Every experienced preacher and habitual sermon listener is in a position to know that my words are soberly true. Not infrequently I myself have been an unintentional party to such development. I remember one of many such occasions. I had had an interesting experience. I mentioned it to a friend, also a preacher, who seemed to like it. Some months later I chanced to hear my friend preach. At the climactic moment of the sermon I began to hear a vaguely familiar story. I awoke with a start to realize that it was the story which I had told him earlier in the year. Oh yes, it was the same story, but with marked changes. The sea captain, who had been the hero of the earlier recension, was now a minister, and his vocabularly had been judiciously spiritualized. But most surprising of all, my preacher friend was himself the title character. He was retelling with moving pathos an experience he had had, and all the *he's* and *his's* had changed to *I's* and *my's*.

Now my friend was a reasonably honest man and one who would have been shocked at the charge of deliberate lying. I am sure that I was listening to but the latest of many tellings of the story since he had first heard it from me. He had repeated it often enough quite to forget its origin, and in the repetition it had come to be real—so real as to become one of his own experiences.

Thus to my original query, "Where do they get them?" I am inclined to think that this is a partial answer, even if by no means a complete one. I would hazard the guess that could we discover the facts we would find that many of the standard tear-jerkers have behind them quite a past. Some have developed along the lines of my own experience. Others have been invented, and the character was originally as imaginary as was the poor Jew on the fateful trip from Jerusalem to Jericho, even though, through force of repetition, he has come to be a definite figure, sometimes a nameles businessman or professor, sometimes a Charles Darwin or Robert Ingersoll or Abraham Lincoln. Incidentally, what a wealth of research material for the tracers of tear-jerkers is to be found in the salty but always devout and so pure humor and insights our martyred President is represented as originating and enacting. Some years ago I heard one of the standard bits of Lincolniana soberly reported by a now deceased clergyman, in which said clergyman was the hero of the piece and the one who said *to* Lincoln what, in the ordinary version, Lincoln says to an indefinite and but vaguely defined Yankee Dr. Watson.

What led me to start this essay was not the morals of this practice. I am no more inclined to be a reformer here than in most other realms. Rather it was as a mild protest at the usually poor quality of the job. A parable to be good must be pat. First century travelers from Jerusalem to Jericho must not go by bicycle. Friendly Samaritans must use oil and wine, not iodine and sulfathiozole. This may be amplified. Tellers of stories in which Alpine guides climb the Matterhorn ought to have tackled a mountain, or at least a hill, themselves. It would help to give a verisimilitude to academic stories were the preacher himself in a position soberly to ponder the probabilities of atheistic professors of philosophy having Bibles ready to hand and conveniently opening at pat verses.

Most critics of the gospel parables have been struck by the fact that Jesus seems regularly to have talked about things which he knew at first hand. And those so-called "parables" in the Gospels where this is not the case are generally suspect precisely because they limp and seem forced. After all, pulpit stories are primarily for the purpose of letting light in, of illumining the point at issue. That is, they are windows, not a bric-a-brac to ornament or clutter the walls. So the glass in these windows ought to be clear, not stained. When the illustration resembles an *objet d'art* it is usually out of place and in bad taste. And when said *objet d'art* depicts experienced Alpine guides toting cripples up the Matterhorn or Wall Street magnates standing by their office windows in the dusk of a New York evening envying scrubwomen, it definitely warrants the query, "But is it art?"

Prayer-Power

John Foster Dulles made this report on the San Francisco conference: "I really believe that the prayers of the church people did have a result in the fellowship so strongly felt by the delegates in the last days. The charter is totally different from Dumbarton Oaks because of its emphasis on human rights and freedoms." —*Fred E. Luchs; The Presbyterian Church; Athens, Ohio*

Pulpit Paragraphs

Contributed by Readers of The Pulpit

● *Who Do You Think You Are?*

WHAT do you think you are? First of all you should remember steadily that you are a child of God. You are neither an animal nor an angel. Being a child of God means that a relationship with God is established which can never be destroyed. We are born a King's sons and nothing can end that royal relationship. It also means that we must live up to our sonship. Always and forever we remain children of God.

Who do you think you are? You are a person in need. Self-deceit is endless, and self-sufficiency is the sin into which we all fall. Yet there come times when we know that of ourselves we are helpless and beaten. We are beings who demand the grace of God.

Who do you think you are? You are a person whom God has trusted and will go on trusting to carry on his work in the world. There are some of us who are overassured and excessively confident, but most people underestimate their place and usefulness. To us all God comes trusting us with the tasks of his Kingdom.

Who do you think you are? You are a person with an immortal destiny. This life is but an infinitesimal part of the whole. Thus, obviously, if immortality matters it must matter supremely. You are on an immortal pilgrimage—you must live accordingly.—*Allan Walker, Waverly Methodist, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.*

● *Make These Men Christian*

NORMAN Vincent Peale tells of getting on a train in Chicago to go to New York and discovering that in the Pullman with him was Roland Hayes. They went back into the observation car and talked way into the night. As they talked, Dr. Peale tried to find the power of this man. Roland Hayes told of being down in the south singing, just a few weeks before. He had come out at night and had forgotten the colored curfew law that they had in that city. Three policemen jumped out of a squad car and started to work him over. Roland Hayes, not knowing what to do, tried to speak. He bowed his head and started to pray, "O God, make these men Christian. Make these men Christian. Give them the love of God."

One of the men said, "Why, I am a Christian."

And Hayes, not paying any attention, bowed his head again and prayed, "O God, give them Christian tolerance and Christian love."

One of the men said, "Why, you are Roland Hayes."

They apologized, put him into the squad car and took him to a hotel. Hayes said, "I was sorry they discovered who I was. I wanted them to get that Christian faith that would give them the power to treat everyone as they were treating me."

That's been the way he sings and the way he lives. In a turbulent time, meeting hate and meeting prejudice and meeting fear, he has always been able to pray that prayer. Remember the story about when he sang before the king and queen of England? He was a little bit timid, thinking of the son of an ex-slave singing before royalty. Just before he went on to sing he received a telegram from his glorious mother, "Remember, Roland, who you are." And he went on to sing.

Somebody asked him what his mother meant by that little telegram. "Why," Hayes said, "my mother simply meant that I should remember that I am a vessel of God through whom God's voice of joy and victory and the struggle of a race might sing its song of victory and its song of spiritual power."—*Frank A. Court, St. Paul's Methodist, Lincoln, Neb.*

● *Better Christians are Better Builders*

TWO American pilots were forced down on a Pacific island during the recent war. They wandered through the jungles for a week and finally came to a clearing in which there was a village of neat and clean buildings. When the two men entered the village they were greeted in good English as fellow Christians. The pilots learned that English missionaries had come to the island fifty years before and had actually transformed a cannibalistic tribe of savages into decent, clean, Christian men and women. The American pilots were soon taken to see the chief of the tribe, who insisted that they see the village. When the men climbed the hilltop they found a beautiful Gothic chapel. It was finished with mahogany on the inside. The altar was a gem of beauty and reverence. The whole tribe were proud of their church. After seeing the beautiful chapel, the pilots were taken behind it to see a crude jumble of stones, piled up like a pyre, with mud sticking between the ugly stones. The chief explained that it was their first church, and said, "As we became better Christians we became better builders." The old chief spoke a terrible truth about the building of God's house. Poor Christians cannot build God's house as it should be. It takes good Christians, Christians with faith, devotion and wisdom to build properly God's house.—*Benton R. Hanan, First Christian, Morgantown, W. Va.*

● *God Needs All We Have*

SO many of us find it hard to consider ourselves as of any particular importance in the divine scheme of things. What we have to offer, whether it be in what we choose to think of as specifically church activities or in witnessing to Christ in the wider work of the world, seems so small and insignificant that we cannot feel that it matters at all. So we are tempted to be slack and careless, and all too often we succumb to that temptation.

The story is told of a popular French priest who was about to leave his parish. As a mark of appreciation his people decided to present him with a cask of wine. The empty cask was set up in the market place and it was agreed that each man should bring along a jugful of wine from his vineyard and pour it in. When all was ready the priest was taken to the cask and told to draw himself a glass. He did so, but there came out nothing but pure water. Each man had said to himself, "My contribution is of no great importance. The quality of my wine is poor and would only spoil the whole. Let me put in water and it will never be noticed." As everyone had precisely the same thought, there was no wine at all.

God needs all that you and I have to offer to him. What matters is not its quantity or its quality, but that it should be the best we have and that it should be offered wholeheartedly and without reservation.—*Allan Easton, Council of Churches, Honolulu.*

● *'Praises to God in Stone'*

ONE of the greatest periods of Christian architecture was that in the Middle Ages which gave us the Gothic Cathedrals. Those cathedrals expressed the energy which drove all western Europe to the Crusades. The Gothic churches soared and aspired above the merely earthly

as the Christian faith aspires to the Eternal. The dominating line was the vertical which rose toward the heavens in glory of God. It is said that the cathedrals taught a new manner of seeking God and that they drew whole communities to him in devotion. It took hundreds of years to complete them. Men and women, boys and girls, rich and poor labored together generation after generation. It is not strange, therefore, that the cathedrals are often called "frozen music" or "praises to God in stone." To visit one of these cathedrals is to know that God is glorified by his house of worship.—*Benton R. Hanan, First Christian, Morgantown, W. Va.*

● *Everyman and The Tide*

What constitutes "public opinion"? We have to understand what it is before we can understand how it comes to be.

The Japanese, in days now happily passed, had a term, "dangerous thoughts."

Thoughts *can* be dangerous. They can be dangerous to the thinker and also to the evils against which we fight. Dr. Vannevar Bush, the great scientist, recently said: "Every citizen, in a strange, subtle way, visualizes where we are and where he feels we are going, and from this is distilled, in a way we hardly understand, our national policy in every regard. It is not just through votes or editorials, or commentators that this action occurs, but more indirectly and through a thousand channels."

When we ask ourselves, "What can *I* do?" the answer is: we can think. Of course, we can act. But thinking and feeling, so far from being inconsequential, have weight and force and power. Flowing out from our minds and hearts and souls, and being added in some mysterious way to the thought and feeling of others, this force becomes irresistible. This is public opinion.—*The Voice.*

● *Fortune Magazine Challenges Pastors*

Some time ago *Fortune* magazine had an editorial dealing with the spiritual condition of America which is a challenge to every minister. Stated the writer: "The church is not proclaiming ultimate truth, but is merely echoing current prejudices. There is only one way out of the spiral of disillusionment. The way out is the sound of a voice, not our voice, but a voice coming from something not ourselves, in the existence of which we cannot disbelieve. It is the earthly task of the pastors to hear this voice, to cause us to hear it and to tell us what it says. If they cannot hear it, or fail to tell us what it says, we as laymen are utterly lost. Without it, we are no more capable of saving this world than we were capable of creating it in the first place."—*Ben Morris Ridpath, First Methodist, Joplin, Mo.*

● *One Lighted Window*

An artist was working on his canvas. The scene he was creating depicted a path running through the deep woods. At the end of the path there was a small cottage. Night had fallen, apparently, for there was little light in the picture. The shadows cast by the trees across the path were dark. The artist had worked almost entirely with colors from the dark end of his palette. There was nothing very inviting about the picture of the cottage, nothing to suggest that it was really a home to anyone. All in all, the canvas portrayed gloom.

Then the artist did an unexpected thing. With a small brush he took a bit of color from the bright end of his palette, blended it with white until he secured exactly the hue he desired, and painted in the cottage one window of light. Skillfully he lighted the area just outside the window. It was not much bright color for so large a picture, but that one lighted window changed the entire picture from a depressing scene to one of an inviting home where there was fire on the grate, and where one felt there must be laughter and music as well.

One lighted window made the difference.—*C. Willard Fetter, First Evangelical United Brethren, Akron, Ohio.*

● *Bad Beginnings Can Be Righted*

Sequoia national park in California abounds in wonder trees—the giant Sequoias, of course, then the sugar pines, the red and white firs, and a great many other large and beautiful trees.

Last summer while strolling along a mountain path with red and white firs on every side, I noticed the curious power of these trees to right themselves after bad beginnings. Here one will jut out at a crazy angle from an overhanging boulder; here another will venture out from a rotting log; and another will spring up from the ground. Now notice the contrast between the behavior of the stumps of these trees and their trunks. As the tree leaves the ground, and sometimes at a very precarious angle, it may be twisted and arched for a few feet, and then promptly the rest of the tree grows straight upward. There seems to be no exception to the rule; all these trees become straight as telephone poles. Naturalists ascribe this to the tree's native hunger for the sunlight, which is satisfied in the most rational way in the world—by growing straight upward!

The Psalmist spoke of the man who should be as the tree "planted by streams of water." Our contemporary theologians may take a sober and somber view of the possibilities for good resident in the human heart. But some of us are naive enough to think that the very God who can place such cunning in the life design of the fir tree is the same God who has built straightness into the human heart—a trait discovered and lived by for all who rise up bravely to the warmth of divine grace. "The soul," as Tertullian said, "is naturally Christian."—*Edward L. Peet, Mill Valley Methodist, Calif.*

● *Friendship Remains Important*

We get woefully mixed up these days in deciding what is small and big, what is of worth and worthless; and our values become distorted in the haste and sensation of life.

A tiny raindrop on the road reflects the great dome of the sky and the ordered movements of the sun and moon and stars.

Simple everyday kindness and friendship reflect the great heart of God who loves the world. So natural and simple—friendship, the natural outpouring of man's feelings toward his fellow man—but so tremendous in its implications.—*Alvin D. Johnson, First Baptist, Middletown, Conn.*

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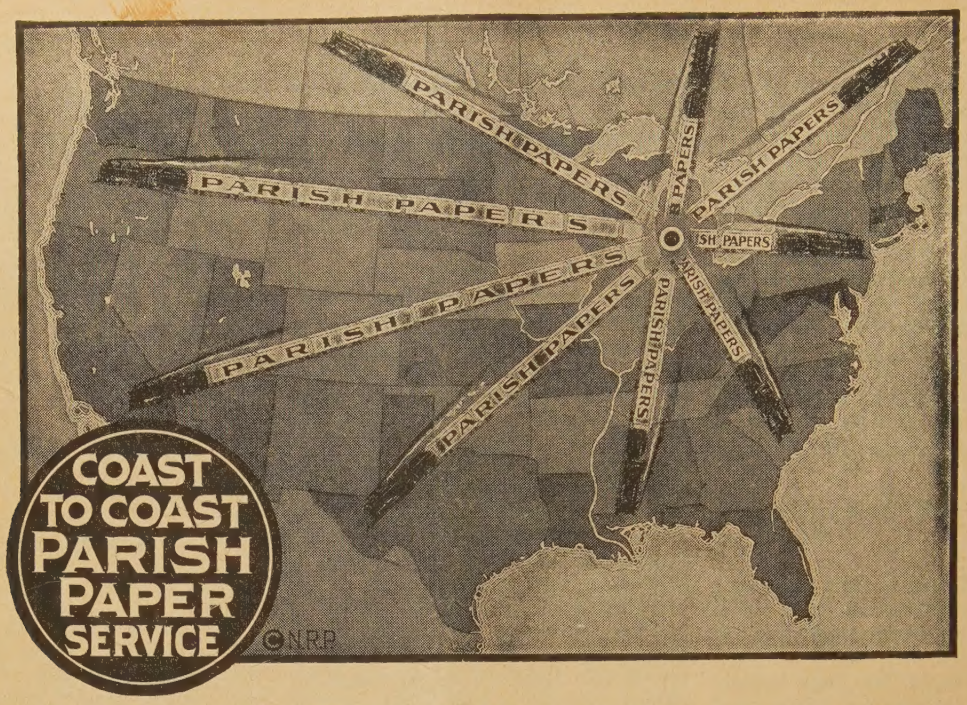

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